

Frequently Asked Questions
Related to Covid-19/Coronavirus
(Revised 3-20-20; new Q&A's or updated answers in **red**)

This document is a compilation of questions that the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) has received from child care providers, families, policy makers, and the public relating to the impact of Covid-19/Coronavirus.

We recommend that you visit this webpage often because this document will be updated regularly as additional questions are submitted.

FOR PROVIDERS: Regarding Georgia's Pre-K Program

Will my Pre-K payment be prorated if my program closes due to COVID-19?

Pre-K payments will not be prorated due to COVID-19 classroom closures. Payments will be based on the 4th roster which is due by April 3rd. Even if the Pre-K classes are closed, Pre-K funds should be used to cover approved expenditures including Pre-K Lead and Assistant Teacher salaries, Pre-K staff benefits, substitute costs, and operating costs.

If a Pre-K classroom is closed, is the child care center required to offer child care to enrolled Pre-K students? If a program closes its Pre-K classroom(s), but the center is still open and providing child care services to families, then the program must offer child care services to the Pre-K children for at least the 6.5-hour instructional day. The services must be free of charge for at least the 6.5-hour Pre-K day because the program is continuing to receive Pre-K payments during the closure period. It would be appropriate to serve the Pre-K children in mixed-age classrooms.

If my program is open and serving Pre-K children, what should I do when Pre-K teachers who are asked to report to work express concerns with their own health and safety and/or concerns with being exposed to COVID-19? When teachers express concerns with health and safety and/or they have family members who are at greater risk for the virus, providers should consider placing them on administrative leave (leave with pay). The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has provided additional information about at-risk groups at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>. Pre-K funds can be used to pay salaries for Pre-K Lead and Assistant Teachers and substitute teachers.

Can a program require teachers to report to work for teacher workdays when the Pre-K class is closed? This decision is at the discretion of the Pre-K Project Director, school superintendent, or other positions of authority who make decisions for the program. However, caution should be used when making these decisions especially for teachers who may be in a high-risk group for COVID-19. Programs may want to contact their local health department for guidance.

Should lunch fees be charged if a Pre-K program is closed? What if a child is absent?

Meal fees for children enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K should not be charged when the Pre-K program is closed. If an individual child is absent, existing meal fee policies should be followed.

If I choose to keep my Pre-K class operating but very few children attend, should I close the class?

This decision is at the discretion of the Pre-K Project Director.

If I keep my Pre-K class open but attendance is low, can I combine classes?

DECAL encourages and will allow Pre-K programs to combine classrooms due to low student attendance. Additionally, a program can choose to reduce staff in classrooms as long as the following conditions are met: 1) child care licensing rules regarding ratio are met; 2) applicable local ordinances and laws

Frequently Asked Questions
Related to Covid-19/Coronavirus
(Revised 3-20-20; new Q&A's or updated answers in **red**)

regarding group size and ratio are met; 3) the group size does not exceed 22 students; 4) All Pre-K Lead and Assistant Teachers are paid.

Providers should consider placing Pre-K staff on administrative leave (leave with pay) if they or family members are at greater risk for contracting the virus. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has provided additional information at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Could Pre-K providers require Pre-K teachers to work from home?

Providers could ask teachers to perform Pre-K related duties such as creating lesson plans, updating WSO, developing instructional tools and resources, etc. from home. However, DECAL is not requiring at-home duties in order for teachers to be paid. If desired, providers should develop a plan with teachers that includes reasonable and realistic duties that could be completed at home with the tools and equipment that teachers have access to at home.

The submit date for Pre-K rosters is March 20, 2020. Will this date be extended due to the closures?

Because the COVID-19 virus has resulted in many program closures, the due date for roster 4 has been extended from March 20 to **Friday, April 3**.

Be sure to submit your roster by close of business on April 3. We strongly encourage you to submit your roster as soon as it is ready to avoid delay of your April payment. If you have concerns about meeting the April 3 submission date, email panda.rosters@decals.ga.gov. Include your organization's legal name in the body of the email.

Will Pre-K payments be paid on schedule? Yes, DECAL will execute payments on schedule even if the state office staff are teleworking or if the state office is closed. The April payment is scheduled on or before April 12, 2020. Payments will be based on the April roster count.

Is the Governor or DECAL mandating that Pre-K programs close? No, neither Governor Kemp nor DECAL is requiring Pre-K programs to close. Closures are at the discretion of local providers.

I operate a Pre-K program at a child care program, and the local school system is closing. Should I also close? Pre-K classrooms operated by child care programs are not required to close if the local school system is closed. However, many child care programs choose to follow local school system's closures. If you need guidance in deciding if you should close, contact your local department of health.

Will Pre-K providers be required to make up days due to COVID-19 related closures?

Currently, DECAL is not requiring make-up days for COVID-19 related closures. At this time, DECAL will not require make-up days for closures through March 31st.

Should Pre-K students be counted as absent on days when the Pre-K program is closed, when the student or a family member is quarantined, or when a family decides to keep a child at home due to COVID-19 concerns? If the program/classroom is closed, the closure should be noted on the attendance roster. If individual students are not present due to a quarantine, the absence should be marked as excused. Absences for students whose parents choose to keep them at home as a precautionary measure should also be marked as excused absences. Programs should not disenroll students who are not attending due to COVID-19.

Should Pre-K lead and assistant teachers be paid if the Pre-K program is closed due to COVID-19?

Frequently Asked Questions
Related to Covid-19/Coronavirus
(Revised 3-20-20; new Q&A's or updated answers in **red**)

Payments will not be adjusted for closure days due to COVID-19. The minimum salary requirements for lead and assistant teachers must be met. Programs are required to pay Pre-K lead and assistant teachers during COVID-19 closures. Providers must arrange to process and distribute pay to Pre-K teachers.

If my Pre-K program will be temporarily closing due to COVID-19, who should I contact? Pre-K Project Directors should contact their Pre-K Specialists regarding any closures. If your program is licensed, you must also follow child care licensing regulations and contact the licensing division.

If my Pre-K program is closed but my child care center remains open for child care, can I require my Pre-K teachers to work supervising other age groups? If so, do I use Pre-K funds to pay them? DECAL does not have guidelines for the agreements between child care programs and their teaching staff. At this time, due to COVID-19, it would be appropriate to serve Pre-K students in mixed-age classrooms as long as child care licensing rules for mixed-age groups are followed. Pre-K funds may only be used for teacher salary for Pre-K teachers working in classrooms where Pre-K students are being served.

If I choose to keep my Pre-K class operating but very few children attend, should I close the class? This decision is at the discretion of the Pre-K Project Director.

Can a program require teachers to report to work for teacher workdays when the Pre-K class is closed?

This decision is at the discretion of the Pre-K Project Director, school superintendent, or other positions of authority who make decisions for the program. However, caution should be used when making these decisions especially for teachers who may be in a high-risk group for COVID-19. Programs may wish to contact their local health department for guidance.

Does DECAL recommend “digital learning” days for Pre-K students? The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than one hour of total screen time for children age 4. Screen time includes ALL screens including TV, laptops, and hand-held devices. DECAL does not support online learning days for Pre-K children and encourages families and Pre-K providers to limit screen time to no more than one hour a day in high quality digital content.

FOR PROVIDERS: Regarding Child Care Licensing (CCS)

How do I report the operating status of my licensed or exempt child care programs?

You can report through your DECAL KOALA account that your program is continuing to operate or that you have chosen to close your program. If you have already reported your status to your CCS consultant via email or telephone, they will enter the information in KOALA for you. If you have not yet reported this information to DECAL, follow these steps:

- Log in to your DECAL KOALA account at www.decalkoala.com
- From the Green Menu Bar, click Facility Update
- Click Operating Details
- Enter your program's COVID-19 info in the Blue area

Is there an alternative disinfectant that can be used in my facility, since there are shortages of disinfectant wipes, sprays, and cleaners?

Frequently Asked Questions
Related to Covid-19/Coronavirus
(Revised 3-20-20; new Q&A's or updated answers in red)

Though commercial disinfecting wipes, sprays, and cleaners are convenient, a simple effective disinfectant can be made using bleach. This is the most recommended product for child care programs to use to disinfect surfaces.

- For disinfection, diluted household bleach solutions, alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, and most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective.
 - Diluted household bleach solutions can be used if appropriate for the surface. Follow manufacturer's instructions for application and proper ventilation. Check to ensure the product is not past its expiration date. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser. Unexpired household bleach will be effective against Coronavirus when properly diluted.
 - Prepare a bleach solution by mixing:
 - 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of water or
 - 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water
 - Visit the following link for products approved by the EPA to fight emerging viral pathogens: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>
These solutions are expected to be effective against COVID-19 based on data for harder to kill viruses. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.).

Should I change any of my classroom practices because of the coronavirus?

You should continue your basic health and safety practices such as handwashing and cleaning and disinfecting surfaces that could possibly pose a risk to children and teachers. Extra care and attention should be given to ensure you and your students use proper handwashing techniques. *Proper basic hand washing* involves using soap and warm water to wash hands for about 20 seconds. Children and teachers should also cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue and immediately dispose of the tissue in a trashcan. For additional information, visit the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance for child care programs. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/checklist.html>
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-schools.html>

If my child care program is exposed to COVID-19, what steps should I take?

1. Immediately contact your local public health department.
2. Based on guidance from the health department, determine your next steps and notify parents, staff, and other individuals possibly impacted.
3. Contact Child Care Services Intake at 404-656-5957 within 24 hours to inform DECAL.

Did the Governor shut down schools and child care due to COVID-19?

Currently, the Governor is encouraging child care providers to make decisions about closing at the local level. If you feel it's in the best interest of the children, families, and staff at your program to close, notify your child care services (CCS) consultant.

What measures should child care providers take if parents are unable to pick up sick children?

Providers should continue with normal business operations and follow their established policy concerning children who are sick and need to be picked up.

What measures should child care providers take if a child is sick at the program?

Providers should follow normal procedures and policies.

Frequently Asked Questions
Related to Covid-19/Coronavirus
(Revised 3-20-20; new Q&A's or updated answers in **red**)

Are additional rules and regulations going to be put into place soon to combat the spread of COVID-19?

Child care providers should continue to operate by the current child care licensing rules unless directed differently by the local health department. Pay strict attention to rules pertaining to hygiene, communicable diseases, cleaning, and sanitizing. If employees or children are sick, the CDC and the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) recommend they stay home.

The CDC is discouraging large events. Does the state have a position on larger child care learning centers as they may be more vulnerable to larger spread?

DECAL has not received direction from the Department of Public Health or the Governor's Office concerning large child care learning centers. We do not anticipate decisions being made based on program capacity.

Will DECAL be providing plans and/or guidance for child care learning centers and family child care learning homes regarding distance learning? Providers should consult Georgia's state licensing rules and *Caring for Our Children* regarding best practices for activities and schedules. Distance learning for young children is not considered best practice. The American Academy of Pediatrics has recommendations for children's media use. For children ages birth to 24 months, screen use is not recommended. For children ages 2 to 5, limit screen use to one hour per day of high quality programs. Screen time includes all screens including television, videos, and any hand-held devices.

Should providers continue to promote family style dining during meals?

DECAL will continue to monitor guidance from the DPH and the CDC for additional information related to the Coronavirus. At this time, there is no additional guidance, and providers should adhere to licensing rules regarding family style dining and other dietary considerations. Providers should use best judgment regarding changes in meal service.

Who should I contact with any questions not addressed in this FAQ?

General questions can be directed to DECAL's main office at 404-656-5957. The receptionist will direct callers to the most pertinent division. You may also directly contact DECAL divisions at:

Child Care Licensing: childcareservices@decalfga.gov

Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS): [1-833-4GA-CAPS](tel:1-833-4GA-CAPS) or the *Contact Us* link on our website
<https://caps.decalfga.gov>

Quality Rated: [1-855-800-7747](tel:1-855-800-7747), qualityrated@decalfga.gov

Nutrition: Kate.Alexander@decalfga.gov or 404-651-8193

Pre-K: prek@decalfga.gov or call 404-651-7420

If public schools in an area close, will the state allow child care programs to serve those children without being screened for the virus?

If the students have not been directed to self-isolate by the local public health department, they can be served in child care programs. The child care provider should ask that question at the time of enrollment. Remember that license capacity and staff: child ratios should be maintained in accordance with state rules and regulations in all classrooms.

If my local school system has closed, but my program remains open, is it safe to accept school age children for care?

Frequently Asked Questions
Related to Covid-19/Coronavirus
(Revised 3-20-20; new Q&A's or updated answers in **red**)

It is the child care provider's decision who to accept care. Providers can ask the family if they have been contacted by, or are being monitored by, the local health department. This information can help providers make informed decisions about accepting children into their program.

If there are two degrees of separation between someone with a confirmed case of COVID-19 and someone at a child care facility, does that person need to self-isolate? For example: If a teacher at a facility had lunch with a friend who was exposed to COVID-19 but is not experiencing any symptoms, does the teacher need to self-isolate?

At this time, the public health departments are requiring self-isolation only for those with direct contact with a person who is confirmed to have COVID-19. Exposure to COVID-19 is contact within six feet for a duration of ten minutes or more. If you have questions about exposure, contact your local health department.

Will a child care provider be notified if an employee or a child at their facility has COVID-19?

DPH conducts a thorough investigation when COVID-19 cases are confirmed or presumed. Anyone who may have been exposed to the patient is contacted and given direction for self-isolation and testing.

Can a child care program increase their capacity to serve additional children during the outbreak?

At this time, license capacity cannot be increased. We understand that you may be asked to care for additional children during this time; however, licensing regulations regarding license capacity are designed to best protect children.

FOR PROVIDERS: Regarding CAPS

If my local school system has closed, but my program remains open, is it safe to accept school age children for care?

It is the child care provider's decision who to accept for care. Providers can ask families if they have been contacted by or are being monitored by the local health department. This information can help providers make informed decisions about whether to accept children into their program.

How will I be paid during this time?

The billing portal will remain open and providers can continue to submit invoices for payment processing. Payments can be processed by the CAPS program remotely. We anticipate no disruptions in payments to child care providers.

If a family is unable to pay their CAPS weekly assessed fee because they are temporarily not working, will CAPS pay the family fee?

Once the family reports this change in their circumstances to the CAPS program via Georgia Gateway, their family fee can be reduced accordingly by CAPS, and your payment will be adjusted based on the new amount.

Can I get paid for children with CAPS scholarships if I am closed, or if I am open, but some children are not attending?

Whether open or closed, a provider may continue to bill for any child with an active scholarship who was present at least once since March 1, 2020. When billing for absent children, or billing for a service week when the center is closed, providers should bill only on one scholarship per child using the

Frequently Asked Questions
Related to Covid-19/Coronavirus
(Revised 3-20-20; new Q&A's or updated answers in **red**)

scholarship with the highest rate. This emergency policy will remain in effect through service week ending March 29, 2020. Even though providers will be paid for all children in care since March 1, 2020, providers must still keep accurate records required by CAPS policy including sign in and sign out records.

FOR PROVIDERS: Regarding Quality Rated

Is Quality Rated currently conducting classroom observations.

Quality Rated will suspend classroom observations until April 13.

Are providers penalized if they are closed and miss their cohort/observation window?

QR will make every attempt to reschedule your observation for your current cohort. However, this may not be possible. In this case, your observation may occur at some other time during this year.

How does this situation impact the 2020 Goal?

The current does not impact the 2020 Goal. Cohorts 3 and 4 have open slots that can ensure all eligible providers are observed by December 31, 2020.

How is the cohort selection process being impacted?

Quality Rated is extending the dates that are considered for the first quarter. The quarter will be extended to April 30, 2020. Extensions for Cohorts 2, 3, and 4 will be considered later. The portfolio submission date for providers in the reverse process for Cohort 1 has been extended to April 15, 2020.

If my observation cannot be completed during my original 30-day window, will I receive a notice of the new window, and will I be allowed to pick additional blackout dates?

Yes, you will be notified of your new 30-day window. You will not be able to select any new black-out days during the new 30-day window, but you will have the opportunity to share any program closure dates.

I am a Cohort 2 provider, and I will not be able to submit by portfolio by March 23rd due to my program being closed. Will I forfeit my Cohort 2 observation slot if I do not submit my portfolio?

No, we will be extending the submission window in which you can submit your portfolio to April 30. If you think you will be closed longer than this time, contact the Quality Rated Help Desk.

Will assessors come if TA's have suspended technical assistance visits to my program?

We will coordinate communication efforts with each local resource and referral agency. These communication strategies are being developed.

If I have opted-out of the rating extension to 2021, and my rating is due to expire within the next four weeks, will my rating be extended?

Yes, we will be extending ratings for all programs that have expiration dates that fall within the next three weeks. We will communicate with programs as decisions are made.

FOR PROVIDERS: Regarding Quality Rated Subsidy Grants (QRSG)

Frequently Asked Questions
Related to Covid-19/Coronavirus
(Revised 3-20-20; new Q&A's or updated answers in **red**)

Should QRS/Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Subsidy Grant (EHS-CCPSG) students be counted as absent on days when the child care program is closed, when the student or a family member is quarantined, or when a family decides to keep a child at home due to COVID-19 concerns?

If the program/classroom is closed, the closure should be noted on the monthly attendance roster. If individual students are not present due to a quarantine, the absence should be marked as excused. Absences for students whose parents choose to keep them at home as a precautionary measure should also be marked as excused absences. Programs should not disenroll students who are not attending due to COVID-19.

If my QRS/Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Subsidy Grant (EHS-CCPSG) program will be temporarily closing due to COVID-19, who should I contact? If you choose to close your program, QRS Administrators and EHS-CCP Subsidy Grantees should contact their Quality Rated Subsidy Analyst. If your program is licensed, you must also follow child care licensing regulations and contact DECAL's child care licensing division.

How will I be paid during this time?

QRS: The QRS billing portal in PANDA/CAPS Maximus will remain open and providers can continue to submit invoices for payment processing. DECAL will process payments remotely. We anticipate no disruptions in payments to grantees.

EHS-CCP: The EHS-CCP Subsidy Grant rosters and payment invoices can continue to be sent electronically, and DECAL will process payments remotely. Again, we anticipate no disruptions in payments to grantees.

Can I get paid for children with a QRS slot or EHS-CCP subsidy grant slot if the child care program is closed, or if the child care program is open, but some children are not attending?

Whether open or closed, a provider may continue to bill for *any child with an active subsidy grant slot* who was present at least one day during March 2020. Additional guidance on billing procedures for services rendered during March 2020 will be shared before the reporting due date of April 10, 2020. This emergency policy will remain in effect through service week ending March 29, 2020. Even though programs will be paid for all children in care since March 1, 2020, providers must maintain accurate records required by CAPS policy including sign in and sign out records. Providers may only bill for a child *with an active subsidy grant slot*.

FOR PROVIDERS: Regarding Staff/Workforce Training

How do I know if a scheduled training is canceled?

If you or your staff registered for training through the Georgia Professional Development System (GaPDS), you will receive a cancellation email if the training is canceled. You may also check the Training Cancellations webpage on GaPDS for the most up-to-date information. If you or your staff did not register for the training through GaPDS, you will need to contact the trainer directly to find out if the training has been canceled.

FOR PROVIDERS: Regarding Criminal Records Checks

At this time will my requests for background checks be processed?

Frequently Asked Questions
Related to Covid-19/Coronavirus
(Revised 3-20-20; new Q&A's or updated answers in **red**)

Yes, unless the DECAL offices are ordered closed, DECAL staff processing background checks will be in the office as usual.

FOR PROVIDERS: Miscellaneous Resources

If my child care business is closing, what resources are available to my business or my staff?

Governor Brian P. Kemp announced that Georgia has received an official statewide disaster declaration from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). This declaration will provide assistance in the form of SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loans to impacted small businesses in all 159 counties in Georgia. The application is now live, and Georgia small business owners can go directly to the SBA for assistance. Small business owners should visit www.disasterloan.sba.gov for information and the application. Loans are available for small business and non-profit organizations. While terms will be established on a case-by-case basis, many will have a thirty-year repayment term with first payments not due for up to twelve months. Businesses should expect to provide a tax transcript, financial statements, and a profit and loss statement. Interest rates will range from 2.75% to 3.75%.

Information on filing an unemployment claim, details on how employers must file partial claims, and resources for other reemployment assistance can be found at www.gdol.ga.gov, and Georgians may visit www.EmployGeorgia.com for access to today's job opportunities.

For CACFP or SFSP Sponsors/Participants

If we are experiencing a milk shortage, what beverage alternative can we serve?

When experiencing a shortage of cow's milk, non-dairy alternatives may be used. However, alternatives must be nutritionally equivalent to cow's milk. Requiring non-dairy alternatives to be nutritionally equivalent to cow's milk ensures children receive vital nutrients needed for growth and development. Alternatives served to children ages 1-5 must be unflavored due to the higher sugar content of flavored varieties.

Acceptable non-dairy or cow's milk alternatives include:

- Low-fat or fat-free lactose-reduced, buttermilk and acidified milk
- Goat milk, sheep milk, buffalo milk (must be pasteurized)
- Soy milk (calcium and vitamin D fortified)

Unacceptable non-dairy or cow's milk alternatives include:

(These are examples and do not represent a comprehensive list.)

- Juice
- Almond milk
- Rice milk
- Almond milk "plus"
- Cashew milk
- Coconut milk
- Water
- Hemp milk
- Oat milk

Frequently Asked Questions
Related to Covid-19/Coronavirus
(Revised 3-20-20; new Q&A's or updated answers in **red**)

- Whole grain drink
- Flax milk
- Calcium-fortified orange juice

Yogurt may not be substituted for fluid milk for children of any age. This is because milk provides a wealth of nutrients growing children need, such as vitamin A and D, and comparable quantities of these nutrients are not currently found in commercially available yogurts.

If cow's milk and acceptable non-dairy alternatives on the above acceptable list are served, no special approvals or waivers are required. However, if cow's milk or acceptable non-dairy alternatives are not available, and you are a CACFP or SFSP participant, you may contact DECAL to discuss a waiver of the milk requirement. Approvals would be based on a reasonable and justified need (e.g., public health emergency).

Where can I find free meals for my child(ren) in Georgia during school closures?

Sponsoring organizations are letting DECAL know where they are serving meals to children during school closures and we are posting those locations at the following link. Click [here](#) to locate a site near you. Share this link with your friends to help communicate where in Georgia children can receive a healthy meal and check back often for updates.

Will CACFP training sessions still be offered during this time?

Web-based training sessions housed in GA ATLAS are still available. All CACFP sessions conducted via webinar will still be offered, i.e., Memo Monday. To view past Memo Monday sessions, visit our [webpage](#). At this time, all face-to-face CACFP sessions have been temporarily postponed. Notification emails regarding these trainings were sent to those registered. Our office will correspond via email when the training sessions are rescheduled.

SFSP Training Sessions

Will SFSP training sessions still be offered during this time?

Web-based training sessions housed in GA ATLAS are still available. All SFSP sessions conducted via webinar will still be offered, i.e., Memo Monday, Procurement Readiness, Budget Readiness, SFSP, and Recordkeeping 101. To view past Memo Monday sessions, visit our [webpage](#). For those already registered for upcoming SFSP New Sponsor Orientation training sessions, training will be delivered **virtually (webinar)** and **web-based (self-study)**. More information is forthcoming.

Can schools that have been approved for non-congregate feeding through SFSP or SSO deliver meals directly to students' homes?

Yes. If the School Food Authority (SFA) determines there is a need and it is logistically feasible to deliver meals directly to homes, it may do so with state agency approval, adherence to all federal confidentiality requirements, and with all necessary federal waiver approvals (including an approval for non-congregate feeding). Delivery could be completed by mail or delivery service, or hand delivered by school staff, volunteers, community organizations, or others. This option is only available to school food authority sponsors of school sites due to student confidentiality and logistical requirements. Schools electing to deliver meals may serve only children who are in area eligible locations or who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

Can I freeze unopened milk?

Frequently Asked Questions
Related to Covid-19/Coronavirus
(Revised 3-20-20; new Q&A's or updated answers in **red**)

Yes, you can freeze unopened milk. Milk must be placed in a freezer kept at 0°F and can be held for up to three months. Frozen milk must be thawed in the refrigerator and used within 1 week. When milk has been previously frozen, the texture may be different after it is thawed out. The change in texture is more noticeable in whole milk than in fat-free milk due to the higher fat content.

We are experiencing a milk shortage. Are there any flexibilities granted for the quantity and type of milk we can provide to children in our care?

Yes, DECAL can approve meals without milk, but we need a brief written notification explaining the interruption of milk service. An official request via email should include a list of site locations/addresses experiencing a shortage of milk and the date the shortage began. Forward your request to your Application Specialist and copy Sonja Adams at Sonja.adams@decalfga.gov

Some food items are difficult to locate right now. Will we be penalized if we can't serve a component for a meal due the current situation?

Currently, DECAL and Child Nutrition Program participants must follow all program requirements regarding serving creditable meals. In the past, USDA has provided flexibilities during situations like public health emergencies; however, a waiver process must be followed for approval. If you have questions or are interested in seeking a waiver, send your request to Kate Alexander at Kate.Alexander@DECAL.ga.gov.

Should CACFP facilities that use pricing programs still charge families a meal fee if the facility is closed? What if a child is absent?

Meal fees for children enrolled in a CACFP participating facility should not be charged if the facility is closed due to the coronavirus outbreak. However, if the facility is open but the individual child is absent, the facility's existing meal policies should be followed.

Are there any funding opportunities available to help serve meals to children in response to the Coronavirus?

The Waldron Charitable Fund announced that it will make \$1 million in grant funding available for 501(c)(3) and faith-based organizations serving the needs of the nation's underserved children. As more schools close in response to COVID-19, this initiative will directly fund those who serve critical health needs (physical and mental), provide nutritional assistance, and support special education for underserved school children. The application window for grant funding will be open until Friday, March 20, 2020 at 5 p.m.

To apply, email a document no longer than two pages in PDF form to WaldronFund@gmail.com that addresses the following:

- Briefly describe the 501(c)(3) organization.
- What problem are you working to solve?
- How many underserved children will be positively impacted by your efforts?
- How will you distribute your solution while keeping children safe during the COVID-19 crisis?
- How quickly can your service be provided?

Are there plans to submit a waiver to allow sponsoring organizations to serve two meals and a snack during unanticipated school closures?

DECAL submitted a waiver to the USDA on March 18, 2020. The waiver would enable SFSP sponsors of open, restricted open, and enrolled sites who are in good standing, and within DECAL discretion, to serve up to two meals and a snack each day. This waiver requests that sponsors have the option to serve

Frequently Asked Questions
Related to Covid-19/Coronavirus
(Revised 3-20-20; new Q&A's or updated answers in **red**)

a lunch and supper as the two eligible meals to claim. Specifically, DECAL requests the following program regulation be waived: · 7 CFR 225.16(b)(3)(ii)

A copy of the official request can be found here:

<http://dec.al.ga.gov/Nutrition/SFSPWaiverRequests.aspx>

For additional information, contact Kate Alexander, Policy Administrator, at

Kate.Alexander@dec.al.ga.gov.

Has DECAL submitted other waiver requests to USDA FNS for the SFSP?

DECAL issued three (3) additional waiver requests to the USDA FNS Southeast Regional Office (SERO) for the SFSP. In the waivers, DECAL requested continued use of the following:

- (1) Area Eligibility in Closed Enrolled Sites (7 CFR 225.15(f)) *
- (2) Meal Service Times (7 CFR 225.16(c)) **(Approved by USDA)**
- (3) First Week Site Visits (7 CFR 225.15(d)(2)) **(Approved by USDA)**

*DECAL is awaiting approval for the remaining request and will notify SFSP sponsors once additional information is received. State policy guidance is currently being revised to reflect all approved waiver requests.

Copies of the waiver requests and public announcements can be found on DECAL's website at:

<http://dec.al.ga.gov/Nutrition/SFSPWaiverRequests.aspx>. DECAL strongly advises organizations to regularly check the DECAL website for waiver updates.

What resources or policy guidance is available relating to unanticipated school closures and/or the Coronavirus?

To date, the following guidance was posted to the DECAL website:

- Child Nutrition Program Meal Service during Novel Coronavirus Outbreaks, March 13, 2020
- Meal Service during Unanticipated School Closures, March 13, 2020
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
 - <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/freeresources/index.htm>
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/children-faq.html>
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/2019-ncov-factsheet.pdf>
- Georgia Department of Public Health
 - <http://dph.georgia.gov/influenza-what-you-need-know>
 - <https://dph.georgia.gov/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-outbreak>

If a statewide mandate was issued requiring child care centers and homes to close, would the USDA provide financial relief or advancement to relieve the impact to sponsors?

At this time, DECAL is not aware of any plans for USDA to provide funding during times in which child care centers or homes are closed and not serving meals to children. If we receive additional information from USDA, we will provide this information to all institutions.

Am I able to donate leftover perishable food items to my children in the wake of unanticipated school closings?

Currently, DECAL is not aware of any flexibility allowing excess food (specifically perishable food items) purchased for the CACFP or SFSP to be donated to program participants in the wake of unforeseen circumstances such as Coronavirus.

Frequently Asked Questions
Related to Covid-19/Coronavirus
(Revised 3-20-20; new Q&A's or updated answers in **red**)

Because of unforeseen circumstances, occasionally there will be leftover food. All alternatives permitted by program regulations and state and local health and sanitation codes should be exhausted before discarding food. Options may include using leftovers in subsequent meal services, offering "sharing tables," or transferring food to other sites. (See attached: Donation of Leftover Foods from School Cafeterias, June 11, 1996). Where it is not feasible to reuse leftovers, excess food may be donated to a non-profit organization, such as a community food bank, homeless shelter, or other nonprofit charitable organizations. See:

https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cn/SP11_CACFP05_SFSP07-2012os.pdf

Governor Kemp has ordered many state employees to work from home to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus. Does DECAL plan to close their offices? If so, what is the best way to submit CACFP and/or SFSP documents to the team?

Currently, DECAL does not plan to close our offices although many DECAL employees are teleworking to ensure greater social distancing. Regardless, DECAL including the Nutrition Services division is conducting business as usual.

The Nutrition Division asks all institutions to submit CACFP and/or SFSP documents electronically via email or uploaded in GA ATLAS. If information is uploaded in GA ATLAS, notify your assigned Application Specialist or Business Operations Representative.

For CACFP/SFSP Applications, contact:

Institutions 0 (zero) - G

Paula Lawrence, Application Specialist

404-463-2111

Paula.lawrence@dec.al.ga.gov

Institutions H-P

Sherika Blount, Application Specialist

404-656-6411

Shericka.blount@dec.al.ga.gov

Institutions Q-Z

Brandi Banks, Application Specialist

470-725-6543

Brandi.banks@dec.al.ga.gov

For CACFP/SFSP Add-a-Site Packages or Sponsor Updates, contact:

Institutions 0 (zero) - G

Temika Moore, Business Operations Representative

404-463-1494

Temika.moore@dec.al.ga.gov

Institutions H-P

Kenya Taylor, Business Operations Representative

404-463-4040

Kenya.taylor@dec.al.ga.gov

Institutions Q-Z

Frequently Asked Questions
Related to Covid-19/Coronavirus
(Revised 3-20-20; new Q&A's or updated answers in **red**)

Edith Pierre, Business Operations Representative
404-463-8314
Edith.pierre@dec.al.ga.gov

SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM (SFSP)

How does the SFSP work during an unanticipated school closure?

In the event of an unanticipated school closure, SFSP sponsors may serve FREE nutritious meals to children in low-income areas. Program requirements are the same as traditional SFSP but occur during the school year when unanticipated school closures occur.

Am I eligible to serve SFSP meals during unanticipated school closures?

Sponsors who have participated in the SFSP within the past two years are eligible to serve meals during unanticipated school closures.

Am I required to submit an application to serve meals during an unanticipated school closure?

SFSP organizations are exempt from submitting new applications to participate if the sponsor participated in the SFSP during the current year or in either of the prior two fiscal years. In addition, new sponsors applying for participation in the program due to an unanticipated school closure are exempt from the application submission deadline. At a minimum, DECAL would still require the following documentation to be considered eligible for reimbursable meals during an unanticipated school closure:

- Site application identifying locations
- Food permit, if applicable (refer to the following link to determine if a food permit is required for the site
<http://www.dec.al.ga.gov/documents/attachments/FoodServiceKitchenInspectForm.docx>)
- Budget outline of projected expenses with supporting documentation. [Click here](#) to access a budget template. This template should only be used during unanticipated school closures.

What sites are eligible to serve SFSP meals during unanticipated school closures?

SFSP sites must still meet area eligibility requirements which means the site is in an area in which at least 50% of the children residing in the area are eligible for free or reduced-priced meals.

Can I serve meals at a new site?

Yes, sponsors may add new sites to serve meals during an unanticipated school closure if the site(s) meet the eligibility requirements noted above.

What are the options for SFSP meal service during unanticipated school closures?

- Breakfast only
- Snack only
- Lunch only
- Supper only
- Lunch and AM or PM Snack
- Breakfast and AM or PM Snack
- Breakfast and Lunch
- Supper and AM or PM Snack
- Breakfast and Supper
- AM and PM Snack

Frequently Asked Questions
Related to Covid-19/Coronavirus
(Revised 3-20-20; new Q&A's or updated answers in **red**)

What is the meal pattern for SFSP during unanticipated school closures?

The meal pattern is the same as traditional SFSP. See <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/meal-patterns>

Can we provide a SFSP sack meal for a child to take home and qualify for reimbursement?

Yes, based on the declaration of a public health emergency due to the novel coronavirus by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, FNS has approved DECAL's request to waive the requirement that, during unanticipated school closures, SFSP meals must be served in a congregate setting. Public notice of the approved waiver can be accessed at:

http://dec.al.ga.gov/documents/attachments/PublicAnnouncement_PublicHealthEmergencyWaiverRequest.pdf

Are sponsors and institutions required to follow proper procurement procedures during an emergency?

Emergency purchases are defined as situations when the welfare of life, property, or the continuation of vital programs are in jeopardy and require immediate, on-the-spot purchases. Emergency purchases can be issued when there is limited time to purchase in the regular manner since the item or service is needed immediately. During an emergency, purchase, micro-purchase, and small purchase procedures are acceptable. Sponsors and institutions must have a process in place to document written quotes received via telephone and keep invoices and receipts on file. Contact DECAL if emergency purchases exceed formal procurement threshold limits.

See <http://dec.al.ga.gov/documents/attachments/ProcurementManual.pdf>

AT-RISK AFTERSCHOOL

Are at-risk afterschool centers allowed to continue serving meals and snacks during unanticipated school closures?

Yes. At-risk afterschool centers may continue serving meals and snacks as part of the At-Risk Afterschool Meals component of CACFP. When operating during unanticipated school closures, afterschool centers must continue to meet At-Risk Afterschool requirements, including the requirement that programs must offer education or enrichment activities. On days when schools are closed, at-risk afterschool centers that normally offer a snack and supper after school may instead choose to offer either lunch and a snack, or breakfast and a snack. These meals and snacks would be reimbursed through CACFP at the free rate. Additionally, CACFP sponsors may serve a snack and/or a meal at a site that has been served meals earlier in the day by SFSP sponsors.

Can I claim reimbursement for meals served to children who did not typically attend my At-Risk afterschool program (e.g., siblings of enrolled children whose schools are closed due to coronavirus concerns)?

Yes, as long as the child is eligible to receive meals and all required records are maintained which include but are not limited to meal count records, attendance records, and menus. See CACFP Policy 18 at <http://www.dec.al.ga.gov/documents/attachments/CACFPPolicy18.pdf> for recordkeeping requirements. Additionally, institutions should ensure the ATLAS application reflects current operations including the current average daily attendance and the types of meals served.

CHILD CARE LEARNING CENTERS OR FAMILY DAY CARE LEARNING HOMES:

I am a CACFP sponsor. Do I have to adhere to monitoring requirements during unanticipated school closures?

Frequently Asked Questions
Related to Covid-19/Coronavirus
(Revised 3-20-20; new Q&A's or updated answers in red)

At this time, USDA has not communicated any flexibility regarding monitoring requirements. DECAL will notify sponsors immediately if additional information is received.

Can I claim reimbursement for meals served to children who did not typically attend my At-Risk afterschool program (e.g., siblings of enrolled children whose schools are closed due to coronavirus concerns)?

Yes, as long as the child is eligible to receive meals and all required records are maintained which include but are not limited to enrollment records for all children claimed, meal count records, and menus. See CACFP Policy 18 at <http://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/CACFPPolicy18.pdf> for recordkeeping requirements. Institutions should ensure the ATLAS application reflects current operations to include total enrollment, average daily attendance, and types of meals served.

Do you recommend closing my child care center or day care home to prevent the spread of Coronavirus?

The health and safety of your employees and the children in your care is a top priority for DECAL. While it is ultimately your decision, the Department of Public Health (DPH) is not recommending widespread school closures. If necessary, DPH may advise communities on mitigation measures including the closure of schools and child care programs. DECAL is in regular contact with DPH and will inform centers/day care homes if their recommendations change. Programs are also advised to follow directives from their local health department.

If you do decide to close your center/day care home, notify your application specialist or email Leslie Truman at Leslie.Truman@decal.ga.gov

If a statewide mandate was issued requiring child care centers and homes to close, would the USDA provide financial relief or advancement to relieve the impact to sponsors?

At this time, DECAL is not aware of any plans for USDA to provide funding during times in which child care centers or homes are closed and not serving meals to children. If we receive additional information from USDA, we will provide this information to all institutions.

Are there any plans to postpone or reschedule the National CACFP Childcare Conference in April?

The Conference Committee has determined that the best course of action for everyone in our community at this time is to CANCEL the National Child Nutrition Conference entirely. Full refunds to attendees, exhibitors, advertisers and sponsors will be issued. Continued patience is requested as these refunds are processed in the next 90 days.

What is necessary to amend budgets to get approval for disinfectants, etc. when these products become more readily available?

Due to the current situation, cleaning supplies such as disinfectants would be considered necessary and reasonable costs. If an institution would like to charge these costs, the ATLAS Budget Detail (Non-food supplies budget category) must be revised if any of the following factors apply:

- A new cost is incurred that wasn't previously approved in the budget
- A line item increases or decreases by 20% or more. A line item is defined as the function level, Operating and Administrative and/or the Program level CACFP and SFSP. If a change impacts either level by 20% or more, a budget revision is required.
- When allocation methodologies change due to changes within the organization resulting in an increase or decrease of 20% or more.

Frequently Asked Questions
Related to Covid-19/Coronavirus
(Revised 3-20-20; new Q&A's or updated answers in **red**)

- A new cost item will be incurred that requires prior or specific prior approval or special consideration (i.e., formal procurement)
- When an approved specific prior written approval item's actual cost is found to be more than the actual approved amount
- Costs that exceed established maximums are unallowable, and the 20% rule does not apply when established maximums are breached.

Once the budget revision is completed, notify the Budget Compliance Specialist at Tremachel.Johnson@dec.al.ga.gov

About Open Records Requests

Can I still submit an Open Records Request?

Yes, the Open Records staff will continue to operate at full capacity. Open Records staff will respond to all requests within 72 hours.

About the Office of State Administrative Hearings

Will the Office of State Administrative Hearings (OSAH) be scheduling or hearing DECAL appeals?

OSAH has cancelled all hearings at all hearing locations until March 31, 2020; cases will be rescheduled. Check your email for updates from OSAH or visit their website at <https://osah.ga.gov>. If you have a matter before any court other than OSAH, you will need to contact that court system directly.

About Head Start and Early Head Start Programs

Excerpted from [ECLKC.ohs.acf.hhs.gov](https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov)

What about wages & benefits for Head Start and Early Head Start staff?

The Office of Head Start (OHS) is directing programs to continue to pay wages and provide benefits for staff unable to report to work during center closures necessary to address COVID-19. This additional emergency response flexibility is important to ensure critical grants management activities can continue during closures. It will help ensure staff are ready and able to return to work as soon as it is possible to resume operations. This flexibility remains in effect through April 30, 2020 unless further extended by OHS.

What can Head Start programs do to support families?

During center closures, employees should continue to engage families and to deliver services to the extent possible, remotely. As for meals, see the prior referenced section on CACFP flexibilities. Head Start and Early Head Start programs may provide meals and snacks to children during center closures.

- Programs could assemble bags of food, including formula for enrolled infants, and deliver them to homes in agency school buses or other agency vehicles. Families could come out to collect the bags or they could be delivered to the door.
- Food could be assembled, and families could pick it up at a center or other location. Care should be taken to avoid large groups and prevent anyone who is sick from coming to collect food. This could include a "drive-through" station in areas where families have cars.

Frequently Asked Questions
Related to Covid-19/Coronavirus
(Revised 3-20-20; new Q&A's or updated answers in **red**)

- Programs could check with local schools, churches, or other community organizations to see if there are partnership opportunities to increase the efficiency of food distribution.

FOR FAMILIES: Regarding CAPS

How do I know if my child care provider or local school system is closed?

Contact your provider or local school system to verify closure. Local news stations will often list school closures. You can also visit www.gadoe.org for information on school closures.

If my local school system closes, can my child go to my child care provider?

If the child care provider is open, has space, and an active scholarship for your child, and the Department of Public Health or your local health department hasn't contacted you and instructed you to isolate at home, your child can attend that program.

What are my options for child care assistance if my child care program is closed, and I need child care to go to work or school?

When you arrange alternative child care for your child(ren), you must submit a *provider change request* as a case change on Georgia Gateway at <https://gateway.ga.gov>. The alternative provider must be approved to participate in the CAPS program.

If I have a CAPS scholarship, and I am instructed to isolate my child for 14 days, and my child doesn't attend the CAPS child care program, am I still required to pay the CAPS weekly assessed fee?

The family is responsible for paying the family fee to the child care provider if any child is in care; however, you should check with your child care provider about their payment policy when children are absent.

Am I responsible to pay my weekly assessed fee if I am on a temporary layoff because of an employer work stoppage?

You can report a change to your case through Georgia Gateway at <https://gateway.ga.gov> informing CAPS that you have experienced a temporary layoff. Your family fee may be reduced based on your change in income.

How will my application, renewal, or case change be handled if the due date occurs while CAPS offices are closed?

CAPS will work diligently to complete all applications, renewals, and change requests as quickly as possible. If State offices are closed, or staffing is limited, there could be some delays. Thank you for your patience as we process your application, renewal, or change request.

How would a state office closure impact my renewal that is due?

Renewals are not be impacted at this time because CAPS staff will be available to process renewals remotely. You can help in this process by uploading copies or by using your cell phone to take pictures of your documents and uploading them to Gateway at <https://gateway.ga.gov>.

How can I submit my renewal application and verification documentation if my local DFCS office is closed?

Frequently Asked Questions
Related to Covid-19/Coronavirus
(Revised 3-20-20; new Q&A's or updated answers in **red**)

Families can use their phone or computer to apply for benefits and upload verification documents by taking a picture of their application and documents and uploading them to Gateway at <https://gateway.ga.gov>.

If I have a CAPS scholarship and my child care provider is not open for business, can I take my child to another child care provider?

Yes, you may take your child to any child care provider who may participate in the CAPS program. If you take your child(ren) to another provider, you must submit a *provider change request* as a case change on Georgia Gateway at <https://gateway.ga.gov>.

What is the best way to contact CAPS if I have questions related to my CAPS scholarships and/or any adverse actions taken on my case?

CAPS can be contacted by calling 1-833-4GA-CAPS or sending us communication by clicking the "Contact Us" link on our website <https://caps.dec.state.ga.us>.

FOR FAMILIES: General Questions

Where can I find free meals for my child(ren) in Georgia during school closures?

Sponsoring organizations are letting DECAL know where they are serving meals to children during school closures, and we are posting those locations at the following link. Click [here](#) to locate a site near you. Share this link with your friends to help communicate where in Georgia children can receive a healthy meal and check back often for updates.

My child's school is closed. Are there any activities we can do at home to help my child continue to learn?

Yes. There are lots of great online resources for home learning activities. Visit our GELDS resource page at: <http://gelds.dec.state.ga.us/Resources.aspx> for a list of activities and resources. Family Connection Partnership has also created a list of family resources and digital learning activities. Go to: <https://gafcp.org/coronavirus/>.

What can my child and I do to stop the spread of COVID-19?

- Stay home if possible
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue; then dispose of the tissue in the trash.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Get a flu shot.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

What should I do if my child exhibits symptoms?

Contact your primary care physician's office or your local public health department.

Are there any resources for supporting learning at home while child care and Pre-K programs are closed?

Frequently Asked Questions
Related to Covid-19/Coronavirus
(Revised 3-20-20; new Q&A's or updated answers in **red**)

Below are resources by age group. Additional resources will be added as they are developed.

All Ages

- 49 Fun Physical Activities
<https://activeforlife.com/49-fun-physical-activities-to-do-with-kids-aged-2-to-4/>

Toddlers:

- Everyday learning activities for toddlers and three year olds
<https://www.parents.com/toddlers-preschoolers/development/intellectual/everyday-toddler-lessons/?>
- Fun, simple activities to engage your toddler and three year old in learning
<https://thisreadingmama.com/simple-toddler-activities/>
- Fun art, science, math and literacy activities for toddlers and threes
<https://talkingisteaching.org/>
- Great ideas to keep your toddlers busy and learning
<https://busytoddler.com/category/activities/>
- Tons of simple and fun activities to encourage literacy and school readiness
<https://www.vroom.org/>
- 20 learning activities for toddlers and threes that use items easily available around the house
<https://www.powerfulmothering.com/20-easy-learning-activities-for-toddlers/>

Preschool (3 & 4 year olds):

- 25 Indoor Play Activities from a Preschool Teacher
<https://www.parentmap.com/article/25-indoor-play-activities-from-a-preschool-teacher>
- 20 Indoor Activities besides TV
<https://theartofsimple.net/20-indoor-activities-for-kids-besides-tv/>